EDUCATION AND THE NATIONAL PURPOSE

by Robert Maynard Hutchins

THE subject of education and the national purpose is one that has always preplexed me. I was therefore glad to accept an invitation to discuss it in the hope that I might learn something while I talked, or failing that, which seems likely, I will learn something during the question period while you talk. I once asked the great cellist Piatigorsky, "Why do you talk so much?" And he said, "Because I learn so much when I talk." So if you do not learn anything from me now, you may have the satisfaction of thinking of Mr. Piatigorsky's example, and reflect that you may learn something while talking during the question period.

Now, the profound reflections with which I rush to enrich this occasion begin with the proposition that education is always determined by national purpose.

The ancient platonic line is still good. What is honored in the country will be cultivated there, and the means of cultivation is the educational system. From this point of view, you will observe that there is nothing wrong with the educational system of a country. What is wrong is the country. No educational system can survive without the support of the people. No educational system can survive unless it

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is a reflection of national purpose as the people understand it.

There are educational systems in the world that seem to be very independent, but they are so only because the people have determined that an independent educational system is what they, the people, want. For example, 75 per cent of the money that goes to Oxford and Cambridge today comes from the public treasury. No government in England could survive the suggestion that it might determine the qualifications of the professors in those institutions, that it might have anything to say about the objectives of their research, and still less that the government might make any suggestions with regard to the teaching program of Oxford or Cambridge.

Under the laws of the Netherlands, the Minister of Education has the power to appoint all of the professors in all of the universities of Holland.

I once asked my friend, van der Leeuwen, who was Minister of Education, "Why don't you use the power of appointment and appoint a professor at the University of Leyden that the faculty does not like or respect? What would happen?"

He said, "My government would fall!"

Well, I said, "You have the power, what do you mean your government would fall?"

He said, "Certainly I have the power. The people of Holland are prepared to entrust me with this power only under the condition that I do not exercise it. Certainly I might exercise it if there was an emergency in the University of Leyden that they could all understand. But in the normal course of events, there is no possibility that I could exercise

it, because the people of Holland want their universities to be independent."

In short, if the educational institutions of a community are independent, if they have the kind of quality that the Dutch and the British universities have, it is because the people so desire it and because this independence is in conformity with the national purpose as the people understand it.

It follows that when national purposes are confused, education will be confused. There is one peculiar affliction of the democratic society to which I shall return later on, and that is the circularity that exists between the establishment of national purpose and the establishment of educational purpose.

How do you change the purpose of a country? Presumably the only way you can change it is through education. But if education is a reflection of the national purpose, it will appear that improvement is out of the question. No such hopeless conclusion can be embraced by an optimistic people, and I shall try later on to see if I can evade it.

Now, the dimensions of this problem in relation to national purpose of education are seen if we ask what should the political community be. Man is, of course, a political animal. Other animals are not political. They may be gregarious, but not political. Since man is a political animal, the hope of Karl Marx that the state would wither away is vain. The state is indispensable to the development of mankind.

The purpose of a political community is not survival. Survival will not do, and if anybody tells you that the policies of the United States should be dictated by the necessity to survive, you should

tell them it will not do. Survival is no more the aim of the political community than health is the aim of human life. As Thomas Aquinas used to say, the aim of a ship captain is not to preserve his ship; it is to take it where it ought to go.

So, we must find an object beyond the mere maintenance of the political community to justify our interest in it, and I would suggest that the object of political communities is the common good. The common good, the good of the community, is the good of each member of the community. It is the good he would not have if he did not belong to the community, and the rank separation that is made between the good of the individual and the good of the community, traditionally in America political discourse, is unfounded and unjustified.

The traditional elements of the common good are peace, order, freedom, and justice.

The next question is: How is this purpose, the common good, achieved? Ideally, the political community is itself an educational enterprise, which is based again on the general, irrefutable proposition that all men by nature desire to know. Other animals do not. Other animals cannot. The ideal political community, then, establishes the means of learning, it removes the limitations on learning. It encourages learning; I do not mean scholarship, although scholarship can be encouraged by a good community, too. What I mean by learning in the political community is that the political community learns how to govern itself. In other words, it learns how to establish the elements of the common good: peace, order, liberty, and justice.

So Alfred North Whitehead said, "The race that does not value wealth of intelligence is doomed."

John Stuart Mill phrased it positively rather than negatively by saying, "The object of the state is the virtue and intelligence of the people."

We notice at once, of course, that the educational system is not the only means of learning in a political community. The first thing is the law. There is an Anglo-Saxon prejudice, and a very bad one, that the law is simply an instrument of coercion. The law's principal function is pedagogical; the law is directed to the virtue and intelligence of the people. It is only because laymen always think of the criminal law when they think of law, that law has ever been thought of as the command of the sovereign that has to be obeyed.

In addition there is the system of communications. Communication is not a business like any other. It is not entertainment on so many wave lengths; it is not a means of enriching private capitalists. Communication is a means of learning in the political community.

The political process is a means of learning. The political process is not, as contemporary political scientists like to say, merely who gets what, how and why. It is the effective organization of discussion looking toward the common good.

The educational system in the good political community is not a system of adjustment, of accommodation or training. It is not even scientific research. The object of the educational system is the discipline of reason, the application of reason, the development of intellectual power.

Two things are required in a good political community from the educational system: liberal education and centers of independent thought.

In this context, one readily sees that political reform is the removal of obstacles to learning. Suffrage, for example, is the chance to learn.

Nationalism can be looked upon as an effort to remove the obstacles to learning. The colonial power prevents the people in the colonial country from learning through the political process. Nationalism is the means by which these shackles are removed.

Freedom is a means of learning, because the ancient proposition is still true, that you cannot expect the slave to show the virtues of the free man unless you first set him free.

These considerations are those which lead to the conclusion that democracy is the best form of government, because democracy provides the maximum opportunities to learn through the political process in the political community.

If we look around us today we see that all signs point to an emerging world political community. We are, I suggest, at the final stage of human history, the dawn of a universal human society. The paradox of nationalism offers only a seeming contradiction. Certainly there are 104 nations now, and there are a couple more every day. This does not contradict the proposition that a world community is emerging. The only way a group of people can join the world community is by becoming a nation.

Ghandi pointed out years ago, over and over again, that nationalism was for him only a way of

joining the human race, and so it will actually turn out to be.

For this, of course, Western technology is preparing the way. Sir Robert Watson-Watt, who is a staff member of The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, was the father of radar and can claim some distinction in the world of technology. He was saying last Friday that the Eskimos would die if the industries of North America were blown up. If you wipe out North American industry, you wipe out the Eskimo because the Eskimos have long since forgotten how to make fish hooks and spears. They buy these products from the industries of North America.

We can see supra-national institutions all around us. The United Nations is there and is functioning whether you like it or not. The leading political phenomenon of the current decade is unquestionably the unification of Europe, which is going on at an accelerated rate. We ourselves, without ever thinking at all that we are involving ourselves in a supra-national community, are involved both in the United Nations and in NATO where a supra-national military command has long since been established.

Mr. Justice Douglas has pointed out, in a paper printed by The Fund for the Republic, that world law is coming into being, not through the adoption of legislation by central world legislators, but through the endorsement and application of the laws of different jurisdictions by other jurisdictions. That is, there are many courts today that are enforcing law that the Romans would have called the *jus gentium,* or the laws of nations, in spite of the fact

that there is no legislation on the books of their own country that would authorize these decisions. They are doing what Lord Mansfield did with the law merchant; they are applying the customs of nations and the laws of specific jurisdictions other than their own, because they know that world economic order and world political order are being born.

The world economic order is at the point where we can say that there are no important domestic problems. The course of gold, food, oil, steel, and industrial products in the markets of the world is determined by the world situation and not by the situation at home.

This morning's *Wall Street Journal* informs us that Mr. Levitt of Levittown is going to build Levittowns in France and that Sears, Roebuck is about to go into the European Common Market. There are no longer any important domestic economic problems left, or, to put it another way, there are no important economic problems that are exclusively domestic.

We can say today that no state is sulf-sufficient, that no state can defend itself. We can say today that no state is remote from any other. We can go around the world now in less time than it used to take to go from New York to Philadelphia. Aristotle said that the size of the state should be limited to the area in which the voice of the herald could be heard. The voice of the herald goes around the world instantaneously today.

The world political community is coming into being whether we like it or not. Now, I like it. And therefore I have to say what I think the national

purpose of the United States should be in the light of the world community that is emerging.

I think that the national purpose of the United States should be to make the world a decent place for everybody to live in. It should be to build the world political community, for the commitments made by the Declaration of Independence to the equality of all men and the commitments made in the Preamble to the Constitution, in my view, extend to the whole world. That means the development of world law, world communication, world democracy, world education, so that the world political community may achieve the common good of the world and learn to govern itself.

The kind of questions that we have to think about, therefore, are these: Something will take the place of nation states, but what? Something must take the place of war, but what? Something must prevent the emerging nations from going the way of Japan, but what?

We have to aim at the virtue and intelligence of all people.

Now, if we look at American education in the light of these principles, we are struck—outside of Rice University—by its total irrelevance. If we look at American education—outside of Rice University—we would infer that the purposes of American education are: to keep ahead of Russia; to keep young people off the labor market until we are ready to have them go to work; to provide a vast personnel system for employers by certifying young people for jobs; to improve the material wealth of our people through medical and scientific research, and through

working for any commercial interest that will pay the bill.

American education is characterized by a preoccupation with means instead of ends, with quantity instead of quality, with immediate practical needs which it cannot meet instead of with virtue and intelligence, which it might do something about.

The two educational requirements of a free society are liberal education and centers of independent thought. The first has almost disappeared and the second are hard to find.

The magic word in American education is "numbers." Numbers of dollars, number of students, numbers of buildings, any number will do. Even numbers of courses. The president of a woman's college in Missouri told me some time ago that it would take me 25 years to go through all of the courses that were offered in his college. I said, "Is that good?"

He said, "You know it is." He was stating a self-evident truth, and now he tells me it is up to 38 years.

This kind of thing has been going on for a long time. George Santayana, the great philosopher, was crossing the Harvard Yard one day in the '80's and happened to meet President Eliot. President Eliot said, "Young man, how are your courses going?"

To which he replied, "Very well, and the young men are keen and intelligent—"

President Eliot stopped him as if he were wasting time and said, "What is the number of students in your courses?"

But, of course, numbers of dollars is best of all. The response to Sputnik, keeping ahead of Russia,

was let's spend a lot of money in the field in which the Russians are supposed to be doing well. We might remember the remark of Ortega y Gasset. "Do you think," he said, "if there are dollars there will be science?"

Science is the outgrowth of a long tradition and slow cultural development. Techniques and technicians can be produced overnight, but a technician is a man who lives his life without theory. You cannot suddenly begin to take science seriously. That is not the way science develops.

We have, for our part, relied on Europe for our distinguished scientists and scientific knowledge. We cannot, by merely dumping money into scientific institutions, develop scientists. I would guess at the present time, to indicate how far we have to go, that 50 per cent of the college graduates of the United States are totally ignorant of science and mathematics.

The effort to meet immediate needs is futile. I once said to a great industrialist in Detroit, "Did you know that right here in Detroit, at Wayne University, there is a school for morticians?"

And he made the characteristic and expected remark. He said, "Well, we need morticians, don't we?"

At another time, I was being driven across the bridge between San Francisco and Berkeley by a man who was a very good driver, and he happened to remark in the middle of the bridge that he had just received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I said, "In what?" He replied, "In driver education."

If you will reflect a moment, you will see that his appearance in California is absolutely inevitable.

Under the laws of California, every graduate of a California high school must be taught to drive. Under the laws of California, you must be taught to drive by a teacher of driving. Under the laws and practices of California, all teachers of driving must be taught how to drive by teachers of teachers of driving. Now, the teachers of teachers in any subject in California must be doctors of philosophy. Therefore, if there are to be teachers of teachers of driving, they must have the Ph.D. degree, and they must have it in driving.

Now, anybody, who has been in California knows that the people in California need to be taught how to drive. In like manner, you could make a good case for putting together a school for morticians in Wayne University.

But the question in both cases is this: Assuming that the educational system of a country has a full-time job, what is it and what are its limits? What is the purpose of education, and does it include the purpose of learning how to do a good job of embalming or do a good job of killing off your neighbor with an automobile?

The way to answer this question is by the process of elimination. If there is any other way in which a necessary human function can be learned than by going through the educational system, why not take it? Why not remove the extra burden from an already over burdened system? For example, we learn how to do things by doing them. Let a man do a job as an apprentice embalmer and embalm. Why teach it at Wayne University? Since the traffic squad knows more about how to drive a car than anybody else,

why should it not teach the young in California how to drive? Why do we have to jump to the automatic conclusion that whenever there is a social need, no matter how large or how trivial, it must be taken over by the educational system, whether or not the educational system has any plans to deal with it.

These pressures, plus one more, specialization, have almost destroyed liberal education and centers of independent thought in the United States. A center of independent thought in the nature of the case has to be an intellectual community. An intellectual community cannot exist unless the members have something in common besides a common president and a common heating plant. They have to have a common language, a common stock of ideas, that is, they have to have a common education.

What every teacher of graduate students (and I am talking about *graduate* students) in this country knows is that he cannot assume any common education on the part of the students, even a common ability to read and write. Premature, specialized training destroys liberal education and centers of independent thought without any compensating advantage. The specialist who is without light from other disciplines finally dies.

I recognize the complexity of all historical examples, and I do not offer this one as more than suggestive, but I think it is suggestive, and it is that 25 per cent of the SS Guard in Nazi Germany were holders of the doctorate.

One of the greatest mathematicians of the world, the chairman of the mathematics department at the University of Chicago many years ago, came to see

me one day, and in the course of conversation he mentioned a graduate student in whom I was interested. I asked how the graduate student was doing. Mr. Bliss, the great mathematician, said to me, "Well, Mr. Hutchins, he is a fine mathematician; you know he has great mathematical possibilities, there is no question about that, but I am sorry I have to tell you, I think he is crazy."

Well, since Mr. Bliss never made a joke in his life, and since he said this with complete seriousness and solemnity, and since I was interested in Saunders MacLane, I asked Mr. Bliss, "What is the evidence for this unfortunate condition?"

Mr. Bliss replied, "He is interested in philosophy."

It gives me some satisfaction to report that Mr. MacLane, after leaving the University of Chicago mathematics department and going to Germany to pursue his idiosyncracy, returned to the University and himself became chairman of the department, after the retirement of Mr. Bliss.

The limitations of specialization in a universally specialized world are the reasons why intellectual communities are required, just as clinics are required for respectable medical care.

The universities used to be called communities of scholars. I am sorry to have to report that in this country the community has collapsed. The only common subject that one hears discussed at faculty clubs across the country now is the weather.

The question about American schools, colleges, and universities is not how many there are, how many students and professors there are, how much money is spent on them, how many square feet they

occupy, but what goes on inside them. One may read Mr. Kennedy's remarks about education with a growing sense of apathy, because they set forth the great American delusion, that if there is money there will be education. If there are dollars, there will be science. Well, if there are dollars, there is a chance ultimately of science. If there are dollars there is a chance ultimately of education. Dollars do not guarantee either science or education.

The question is what goes on inside. Now, what goes on inside an educational institution or an educational system has to be determined by the purpose of that institution or that system. A purpose is a principle of allocation and principle of limitation. It tells us what to do with our resources and it tells us what not to do.

A purpose is a standard. It is only by reference to this standard that we can tell whether we are succeeding or failing. If, for example, our purpose is to get everybody into school, the United States is doing very well. But are we not entitled to wonder what happens when they get in?

Mr. Toynbee pointed out years ago the causal connection between free, compulsory education and the rise of the yellow press. Universal, free, compulsory education was introduced in England in the year 1870. To the day, almost, at which that population rose to maturity and the point at which they could buy newspapers, the newspaper publishers of England responded to the new market with the yellow press.

It is possible to produce, with a system of free, universal, compulsory education, a vast semi-literate

population. For example, last April the superintendent of schools in the City of New York reported that there were 10,000 pupils in the New York school system in the seventh grade who were four years behind in reading.

If the purpose of American education is to help us live long, it is doing very well, though it would have to be said on the other side that the physicists are making our lives look shorter every day. But if the purpose of American education is to help us to understand and cope intelligently with the new world that is upon us, then another verdict must be rendered.

Whitehead on another occasion said our age must devise methods of dramatic novelty or see the end of the upward striving of our race. We cannot now foresee what those methods will be; we know only that we shall need all the intellectual power we can command to devise them.

Now we come to the tough part. How do we escape the circularity of education and national purpose? If the purpose of education is confused, it must be confused because the national purpose is confused. On the national scene, and any aspect of it, you see the same emphasis on numbers, especially numbers of dollars, and on getting ahead, as you see in American education.

It is possible that in the affluent society this may be changed. Some Russian scientists were at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara the other day, and at the end of every paragraph they would say, "So in 20 years we will equal or surpass the American standard of living." Finally one of our members got so irritated

with this oral recurrence that when they said once more, "So in 20 years we will equal or surpass the American standard of living," he replied, "I hope you don't, because if you do you will be just as unhappy as we are."

It may be that with affluence there will be a national change that could amount eventually to the restoration of the political community. Certainly one thing is sure, we are going to have leisure. The gross national product has long been hovering around an all-time high, and the major industries, to say nothing of the farms, are partly idle. We have a hard time getting unemployment below seven per cent. The 25 hour week has just been presented to the electricians in New York. What are they going to do with themselves when the overtime evaporates?

Some studies have been made of the energy at the disposal of the American people, and it works out that every man, woman, and child in the United States has the equivalent energy at his disposal of that which was put forth, before the Civil War by 85 slaves. Every man, woman, and child in the United States now has 85 slaves, and probably it will soon be around 170, because the energy gradient is moving steeply upward.

The Greek word for leisure is the origin of our word for school. The Greeks used their leisure for intellectual development and work for the common good. Athens, at its best, for a brief period, was organized as an educational enterprise, a great enterprise in adult education. The greatest opportunity in education in the world today is the opportunity for the education of adults in the United States.

One reason that such a great opportunity exists is that nobody has cared enough about adult education to institutionalize or bureaucratize it. Adult education is almost the only field in the United States in which you can pursue any intelligent program that you can devise without fear of unions of one kind or another. It is possible that through programs of adult education the true sense of national purpose might grow and might spread.

Some hope is offered, too, by the extraordinary pluralism of American education, the thousands of school boards (40,000 at the last count), hundreds of colleges and universities, all of them operating independently of one another. If one school, one college, one university were able to give us an example of liberal education, or were able to be a center of independent thought, its example might grow and spread.

In some way or other, it seems to me, we have to shake ourselves free from the slogans with which we have anesthetized ourselves and see to it that America pursues her national purpose. That purpose is to make the new world a decent place for everybody to live in.

(A question and answer period followed the address.)

Question: Does the answer to your problems of education in national purpose lie in something which is done in European states, the use of tests to cull out the supposedly more promising students at about the sixth grade level, or some form of individualized education?

Answer: The great crossroads in England is what they call the eleven plus examination, taken at the age of eleven plus, and the consequences of this examination last all of your life. The students who make a poor showing go into a different educational program. There is a lot of talk, you know, about trying to build up the second-best program and advertise it and make it look just as good, and not as if you are becoming a second-class citizen.

But if you do not do well in the eleven plus, you are, for many purposes, a second-class citizen. You will stay that way. The reason you will stay that way is that everywhere in the world, certificates and diplomas and degrees are being substituted for education. And if you have not a certificate or diploma or degree, you will not get the job. That is what I mean by saying the educational system is becoming a vast personnel program for the employers of the world.

Well, the question is whether I am in favor of going into a system in which, instead of saying that everybody is entitled to as much education as he can make anything of, we should say we are going to have only a few go on to higher education and we are going to cull them out somewhere, somehow, along the line.

I believe that at some point there is a cut-off point. I do not see any reason why a boy should be permitted to be a candidate for the Ph.D. degree if he has no qualifications for it, beyond the fact that he is the child of a taxpayer or is graduated from a college. But liberal education is, in my view, indispensable for everybody. I believe that a great deal

can be done to administer it at an earlier age than the one that we have customarily associated with it.

Father Gannon, who used to be president of Fordham, seriously advanced the idea that we could have a three-year elementary, three-year high school and three-year college and obtain a bachelor's degree at the age of 18. I think he was right. I think it would take a long time to get there because at the present time the tendency is all the other way.

I will give you an example. The University of Illinois gave an entrance examination to all freshmen (whom they are required to take) of the c-a-t spells cat variety. Thirteen per cent of the students failed. Ten years later they gave a similar examination to the entering freshmen and 43 per cent of the students failed.

The reason is obvious: it is that the high schools of the state, since they knew the university had to take the students anyway, decided they didn't care to teach them how to read and write. They left it up to the university. The university promptly responded by offering remedial courses in this field, and I think it is fair to say that almost every university in the United States now offers remedial work in elementary English, elementary arithmetic, or elementary anything else. I will go further and say that it is my impression that almost all of the work that is now given in the first two years of college could be given and should be given in the high school. The great transformation of the colleges in the last 50 years has been the importation into them of high school subjects.

Therefore, I take the view that we should reorgan-

ize, that we should put the pressure on, we should take education seriously. We should recognize that it requires hard work. As Aristotle said, learning is accompanied by pain. And one of the horrors of the child-centered society is that if the child objects to the pain associated with learning, we say, "All right, don't bother." Education has never been taken seriously in this country. We have not had to take it seriously because we could be very prosperous and powerful without it.

All the great financial giants of my boyhood boasted of their illiteracy. Ford and Carnegie and Edison would say, "What a waste of time it is to go to college." I think they had a point.

You could not make more money by going to college, that was true. The college program that they were urging you to avoid wouldn't do you very much good, but it is wrong to say that because you cannot learn how to make money in college you should not go there. It is wrong to say because current college programs have no significance that it is impossible to develop a college program that has significance. The great national necessity is the development of a program of liberal education that has significance. I would not exclude anybody from it, but I would expect that if we were properly organized, intelligently directed, we could get everybody through it by the age of 18, certainly by the age of 20.

And within the next 10 years you will find out that everybody is staying in the educational system until the age of 20.

Question: You just said that you thought education should be reorganized, that the primary emphasis should be redirected. Do you think this ought to begin on a local level, should the local city school system begin this reorganization or do you think the state ought to handle this? Where do you think the start of this ought to originate?

Answer: I believe in federal aid to education and in federal standards. I think we ought to have a national minister of education. All we have in Washington now is a bureau that issues statistics. I am at a loss to understand why we believe one part of our country should be uneducated and the other part educated, and it makes no difference to either part. This is an incredible situation. I do not see any justice in it. I do not see any sense in it from the standpoint of self-defense.

The people who are streaming to California at the rate of 1500 a day were all educated somewhere else. The people of California are going to have to put up with them and their education. Next door to me in Chicago were 350,000 former residents of Mississippi, and the people of Chicago are now paying for the education of those ex-Mississippians by supporting the jails, hospitals and like institutions. This is simply beyond belief. We are either a country or we are not.

We are concerned now with the education of people in Ghana. We have the Peace Corps walking all over the place, because we are so concerned with their education, and properly so. But how anybody can fail to see that the problem of education in this

country is a national problem that has to be met nationally, and at the start, I don't understand.

Question: Would you extend the federal aid to private schools?

Answer: Yes. It is done everywhere. It never causes trouble unless you don't do it. There is no way I can equivocate on this subject. In 1937, which is 25 years ago, I think, I wrote an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* entitled "Uncle Sam's Children," in which I said that I was in favor of federal aid and I was in favor of federal aid to qualified private schools. The reason is simple enough. This country is in need of education. Is there anybody that questions that? This country is in need of education, and a private shcool is supplying an educational need that would otherwise have to be met at public expense. If, then, the school is qualified it should be assisted, and I can solemnly assure you an examination of the decisions of the United States Supreme Court on the issues of church and state will offer you lawyers in the audience many, many avenues through which you can drive a federal bill.

Question: Mr. Hutchins, what is your thinking with regard to the educational program that you had so much to do with at the University of Chicago?

Answer: I think about it now just what I thought about it then. I thought then that it was not very good, but it was the best there was. I still think so.

The idea was, in the first place, to give—if we had to have degrees—some meaning to degrees. I had always been in favor of Barrett Wendell's recommendation which was that the bachelor's degree should be conferred on every American citizen at birth. If you did that, then you could get on with education. But since you could not do that, you could at least try to give some meaning to the degrees that you had. So, we said, "What would make sense out of this system?"

Well, you have an elementary school and a secondary school and then you have a program of basic education, general education, and then, as I prefer to call it, liberal education. Let's give the first degree for liberal education and give it to the people at the point where liberal education is completed. We said we do this at the end of the sophomore year. We said we will award the bachelor's degree at the end of the sophomore year. Then we had a chance to make the master's degree cover broad specialization, because you were not permitted to be a candidate for the master's degree in one department. Following the master's degree, we had a three-year run to the Ph.D. in which there was specialization resting on a pyramid.

As to content, then, we said let the student understand the major branches of knowledge. Every student at the University of Chicago had to spend two years in the biological sciences, two years in humanities, and two years in social science. He had to try to understand the new scientific world that is emerging as well as the more traditional world of history, philosophy, and literature.

We had, I think, a pretty good working definition of liberal education. We had a pretty good scheme for the university as a whole. It has been modified to some extent, as I understand it, because of the pressure of other institutions, because of the difficulties of transferring out of an eccentric system to a conventional one, and also because of the pressure of the departments and professional schools.

The medical people (not all of the medical people, of course, but the majority of the faculty of one of the great medical schools of the world) quite honestly believe that in the preparation for medicine, chemistry, mathematics, and the biological disciplines are everything, and under present competitive conditions are indispensable. Start the boy out as young as possible, six if you can get him, focus on nothing but medicine. We would say to them in our childish way, "Wouldn't you like to have a doctor who would be a good citizen and understand things?" And they would say, "Yes, sure, we would like that, but this has to come first."

Well, it has come first in a very interesting way. The principal purchasers of Great Books in the United States are doctors. This is not merely because they are the most affluent class in the United States—which they are—it is because when they arrive at affluence they realize the defects of their education, and the Great Books offer them the best opportunity, or the readiest opportunity, at least, to try to correct them.

Question: Mr. Hutchins, what do you recommend that we should do to insure that no talented young

people lose out on college education because of financial reasons?

Answer: I believe that Mr. Kennedy's proposition —which I made 25 years ago—is absolutely sound, that is, national scholarships. But I would make them national competitive scholarships, and I would absolutely divorce them from any geographical consideration. If it turned out that in competitive national examinations no single high school graduate in the state of South Carolina was qualified for a scholarship, this would be the best thing that could happen to South Carolina.

Question: Mr. Hutchins, you indicated a moment ago that you were not particularly in favor of the eleven plus system, or a system of that nature. Do you think that the vast majority, or practically all of the high school and secondary students are college material?

Answer: Why, yes. I believe that nobody is uneducable. The reason that people look uneducable is that we do not want to take the trouble to educate them. This has been my uniform experience going back now over 45 years. An educational proposal will be introduced, and the professors, as one man, will say that the students cannot do the work.

Now, as you know, in education, there is no such thing as a good idea and a bad idea. There is only an old idea and a new idea. In education a good idea is an old idea, and a new idea is a bad idea.

So, the task of educational administration is to keep repeating the new idea until it becomes old.

You make the new idea old, and in that way you can make the bad idea a good idea. So when the new idea is introduced, the professors as one man will say the students cannot do the work. By bribery, corruption, pressure, public addresses, any other way you can think of, you can get the proposal through, and all the students rush in and do the work. They do it magnificently. Everybody thinks it is great. The only way you can diagnose the previous attitude of the staff is that they did not want to do the work.

It must never be forgotten that any change in education is a change in the habits of the professors. People do not like to have their habits changed. I do not like to have mine changed, and I do not blame professors for not wanting to have their habits changed. Therefore, when you are up against, as the high schools of Illinois were up against, a lot of kids who did not want to read and write, what should you do? Should you say at once that these children cannot learn to read and write, pass them on to the university which has either to fire them or teach them how to read and write? The university proceeded to teach them how to read and write.

I do not include morons in this proposition, but I will maintain that anyone above the grade of moron is educable. The thing is to find a way to educate him. I believe, moreover, that everybody above the grade of moron must be educated if you propose to have the kind of democratic society and political community that you want to see.

Question: I believe that you are identified with Great Books discussion groups, and I would like to hear you comment on some of the earlier beginnings of Great Books discussion groups as well as the progress that they have made.

Answer: It is only modesty that prevents me from saying that I regard the Great Books movement as the greatest single advance in education in the United States since Horace Mann. The only reason I mention Horace Mann is that he is the only man I can think of.

There must be now, I think, around 200,000 people who have been exposed to these Great Books discussion groups that are carried on by the Great Books Foundation.

I do not care what anybody says about the motives of people who go into the groups or about how much is learned from them. I am perfectly prepared to believe that there aren't very many people who could pass an examination on medieval philosophy as a result of being in these discussions, and I am perfectly willing to believe that many people join these groups because they are lonely or want to get a leg up the social ladder, or whatever you say. The point I wish to make is that culture comes by contact. You know it is impossible for us to remember what the Middlewestern parsonage was like 20 or 40 years ago. There was nothing but books. If you look at the academic world today, you see that it is peopled with the children of these Middlewestern parsonages who ran into books at an early age. If you talk to anybody who has some

kind of intellectual insight or interest, and you try to find out where he got it, he got it because he met a teacher or read a book, or perhaps even—and this is incredible—perhaps even saw a television show that suggested something to him.

Culture comes by contact, and the job of the educator is to multiply those contacts, to suffuse the country with contacts so that the contacts are inescapable. The Great Books movement puts you in contact with the greatest minds of Western history. It is impossible to believe that one can come out of such a relationship, such an association, unchanged.

Question: Don't you think one of the ways to start improving public education is to do away with schools of education?

Answer: The answer to that question is yes.